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Message Text

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11
ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15

USIA-15 OMB-01 RSR-01 /106 W
---------- 122177
R 180800Z AUG 73
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 301
INFO AMEMBASSY ATHENS
AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 8373

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINR, IT, US, GR, LU, UR, XH
SUBJECT: PANORAMA'S LATEST SPY STORY

REF: ROME 3261 NOTAL

1. IN LATEST SPY-THRILLER FABRICATION (PREVIOUS EPISODE IN REFTEL), AUGUST 16 ISSUE OF THE MASS-CIRCULATION NEWSWEEKLY "PANORAMA" FEATURES ARTICLE ON "ROME, CAPITAL OF SPIES". MAGAZINE OMINOUSLY HINTS, THOUGH IMAGINARY CITATION FROM EMBASSY DEA CHIEF TARALLO, THAT MISSING U.S. NEWSMAN JACK BEGON WAS WORKING FOR CIA IN TRACING NARCOTICS MOVEMENTS INTO U.S. AS WELL AS MOVEMENT OF "MAFIA DOLLARS" INTO EUROPE AND, PERHAPS, ALSO INTO ITALIAN POLITICAL PARTIES. ARTICLE ADDS THAT BEGON WAS CONVINCED OF CLOSE LINKS BETWEEN ITALIAN FINANCIER MICHELE SINDONA AND THE MAFIA, AND WAS HIMSELF ALMOST CERTAINLY AN ACQUANINTANCE OF THE LATE CARMEL OFFIE WHO "PLAYED AN IMPORTANT PART IN DISTRIBUTING U.S. FUNDS TO ITALIAN POLITICAL PARTIES."

2. TANGLED WEB WOVEN BY MAGAZINE IS OFFIERED AS PROOF POSITIVE THAT ROME NOW RANKS AS MAJOR ESPIONAGE CENTER. GOING BEYOND US-USSR, COLD WAR-TYPE ESPIONAGE OF PAST, ROME HAS NOW BECOME FOCAL POINT FOR ACTIVITIES OF ARAB AND ISRAELI AGENTS AND EVEN FOR LUXEMBOURG SPIES PRYING INTO VATICAN FINANCIAL INTERESTS. ALSO
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ACTIVE ARE "GREEK COLONELS" WHO "MOST NOTED AGENT" IN ROME,

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"KOSTA PLEVRIS", IS ACCUSED OF AIDING THE NEO-FASCIST MSI AND OF HAVING BEEN SEEN IN ROME A FEW DAYS BEFORE THE DECEMBER 1969 MILAN BANK BOMBING.

3. DESPITE FACT THAT ITALIAN COUNTERESPIONAGE FORCES OUTNUMBER "170" FOREIGN SPIES BY TWENTY TO ONE, THE ARE KEPT FORM EFFECTIVE JOB AGAINST ARABS, ISRAELIS, GREEKS, ET AL, BY CONTINUING OVER-FOCUS ON SOVIET AND EASTERN EUROPEAN ACTIVITIES IN "COORDINATION WITH CIA".

4. WHILE LATEST ARTICLE IS FURTHER, PAINFUL EXAMPLE OF ONCE-REPUTABLE PANORAMA'S FURTHER DESCENT INTO SCANDAL AND SENSATIONALISM, IT ALSO INDICATES THAT MAGAZINE, WHETHER BY DEFAULT OR DESIGN, HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY AVAILABLE TO FAR LEFT FOR ATTACKS AGAINST U.S. AND IN THIS CASE, AGAINST ITALIAN VIGILANCE OVER SOVIET AND EASTERN EUROPEAN INTELLIGENCE ACTIVITIES IN ITALY. INDEED, PANARAMA'S LAMENTATIONS THAT ITALIAN SECURITY FORCES ARE "VIGILANT AGAINST ONLY ONE FRONT" PROMPT THE CLEAR SUSPICION THAT THOSE BEING WATCHED ARE DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL OR PART OF THE STORY.
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